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DEPARTMENT OF HOSPITAL AND TRAINING SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

IN CHARGE OF
ALICE SHEPARD GILMAN, R.N.

THE EIGHT-HOUR DAY

I.

THE EIGHT-HOUR DAY IN A SMALL TRAINING SCHOOL

BY FLORENCE L. WETMORE, R.N.

Superintendent, Glens Falls Hospital Training School for Nurses

The following outlined plan is designed to be applicable to nurses' training schools throughout the country in which the nurses average one to every two or three patients.

Realizing, as all superintendents of training schools must, the swiftly on-rushing tide of affairs to-day which marks such rapid progress in the equalizing of the burdens of the world, especially for the people who labor with their hands, it would behoove the training schools of the country to swing out into the middle of the stream, rather than be left in some eddy along the shore.

The eight hour law which so many labor unions demand, both for health and progress, ought to become a slogan for the training schools for nurses. For far too long a period have the nurses been kept at their ten hour day task and twelve hour night task, with additional hours added for study, allowing them very little actual, not theoretical, time for recreation, for most superintendents realize that while time off duty is planned for their students, it is not always realized, because of the very nature of their tasks. To substitute an eight hour day for the system now so commonly in vogue would mean to the nurses an opportunity for healthful exercise, better culture, more leisure for study, and a saner outlook on life. To those of us who have spent years in hospital work, the call to relieve the nurses from the very abnormal atmosphere of depression and trouble which surrounds them daily, ought to be a clarion call indeed.

At a recent League meeting, this question came up for discussion, with the result that as yet the hospitals represented had entertained no feasible plan for putting into operation a workable eight hour system.

We are presenting here one that we feel could be introduced, with some modifications, into training schools whose average of nurses to patients is that of one nurse to two or three patients. Day duty under this plan includes the hours from 7 a. m. until 11 p. m.; night duty, from 11 p. m. to 7 a. m. The night nurse, by this system, has her evenings until 11 o'clock, and works the eight hours of the early morning. The sixteen hours of day duty may be divided into periods of four hours each, but no nurse should work more than eight hours during the sixteen. For instance, one nurse, called a relief nurse, could work from 7 to 11 in the morning and from 7 to 11 p. m., divided time. Hospitals could arrange hours from 7 to 11 a. m.; 11 a. m. to 3 p. m.; 3 p. m. to 7 p. m.; 7 p. m. to 11 p. m., to make all nurses' time during the day equal. This would involve, it seems to me, but one more nurse than is ordinarily now stationed on floors, and the time on duty may be best regulated to meet the heaviest demands in the different departments. Individual schools would have to make arrangements for their class hours. We feel that for the present, the nurses could attend their classes, which are arranged under a weekly schedule, whether on or off duty, all classes to be held in the day time. We are in favor, also, of introducing study time, including one hour per day for each nurse, with the keeping of a register in the class room in which she shall subscribe her name each day, and the hour which she has devoted to her theoretical work.

This arrangement, if systematically carried out, will provide the nurse with approximately eight hours of practical work, eight hours of recreation and eight hours of rest.

Certainly a plan which could meet the approval of anyone interested in improving health or morale, or influencing the cultural life of the young women now members of training schools, will have the added advantage of bringing the profession of nursing to the attention of cultivated and educated young women throughout the country. It is a well known fact that the long hours, and the steady grind and constant confinement are very unattractive features to any young woman looking with favor toward nursing as a profession, and a life work.

II.

EIGHT HOUR NIGHT DUTY, CHART, AND TIME SLIP

BY LIZZIE GOEPFINGER, R.N.

Acting Superintendent of Nurses

3 to 11 Duty Nurses.—Nurses will report on duty at 3 p. m. and remain on until 11 p. m. Dinner hour regulated by head nurse.